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SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN-JORDANIAN CITIZENSHIP: A PRIMER

REF: A. AMMAN 1667  
[B](#). AMMAN 1520  
[C](#). 08 AMMAN 1466

[1](#). (SBU) Summary: The current debate in Amman about the citizenship status of Palestinian-origin Jordanians centers around regulations connected to Jordan's 1988 unilateral disengagement from the West Bank. Some of the regulations left the residency requirements for certain groups vague. This lack of clarity has generated much confusion about which Palestinians have the right to full Jordanian citizenship, a topic of considerable public controversy in recent weeks. End Summary.

#### The Disengagement Regulations

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[2](#). (SBU) Through his recent acknowledgment of a policy of citizenship revocation for certain Palestinian-origin Jordanians, Interior Minister Nayef Al-Qadi has re-opened the debate about the meaning of Jordan's unilateral disengagement from the West Bank in 1988 (Refs A-C). As part of the disengagement, a series of implementing regulations were issued as a royal decree to clarify the legal impact of the decision on citizenship and other matters. These regulations are now at the heart of a sensitive discussion about who is Jordanian. Below is a guide to the system of identification documents derived from the disengagement regulations.

#### 1948 Refugees

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[3](#). (SBU) The disengagement decision did not impact the status of 1948 refugees. Their status remains unchanged since 1948. They are full citizens of Jordan with no accompanying documentation that identifies them as Palestinians or refugees. Refugees from 1948 enjoy full citizenship rights, including full access to Jordanian government services, full validity passports, national identity numbers (which infer citizenship), and resident status in Jordanian educational institutions.

#### 1967 Refugees: Yellow Card Holders

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[4](#). (SBU) The disengagement decision reconfirmed as full Jordanian citizens refugees from 1967 who reside in Jordan. Beginning in the 1980s, these refugees were given yellow cards which help the authorities keep track of their status. Yellow card holders enjoy full citizenship rights, including full access to Jordanian government services, full validity passports, national identity numbers, and resident status in Jordanian educational institutions.

#### 1967 Refugees: Green Card Holders

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[5](#). (SBU) Refugees from 1967 who reside in the West Bank were able to retain their Jordanian passports under the disengagement decision, but their claims to Jordanian

citizenship were limited. Starting in the 1980s to distinguish them as residents of the West Bank rather than residents of Jordan, these refugees were issued green cards by the Jordanian authorities. Green card holders have full validity Jordanian passports, but those passports do not indicate citizenship as they are not accompanied by a national identity number. Green card holders have limited access to Jordanian government services, and pay the non-Jordanian rate at hospitals, educational institutions, and training centers. Green card holders must obtain a work permit in order to be legally employed in Jordan.

#### Gazan Refugees: Blue Card Holders

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16. (SBU) The citizenship status of refugees from Gaza was not impacted by the disengagement decision. They retained their blue cards identifying them as Gazans and were allowed to maintain the limited validity "laissez passer" passports that had previously been issued to them by the Jordanian authorities. Blue card holders have no access to Jordanian government services, and are almost completely dependent on the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for education, health, and welfare services. They pay the non-Jordanian rate at hospitals, educational institutions, and training centers. Blue card holders must obtain a work permit in order to be legally employed in Jordan.

#### The Issue of Residency

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17. (SBU) The growing controversy in Jordan over status

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changes between yellow and green cards centers on the residency status of Palestinian-origin Jordanians. Article Two of the disengagement regulations states that "every person residing in the West Bank before July 31, 1988 will be considered Palestinian and not Jordanian." There is no explicit or implicit definition of residency in the regulations, either before or after the disengagement decision. There are no requirements that yellow card holders spend a certain amount of time in Jordan to be considered as residents, just as there are no requirements that green card holders spend a certain amount of time in the Palestinian territories to maintain their status.

18. (SBU) The net result of the vague provisions on residency is confusion within the Jordanian-Palestinian community about what the disengagement regulations mean. The Ministry of Interior has never clarified the residency requirements for the various status groups, causing many to see the Ministry's actions as either random or purposely designed to strip certain people of Palestinian origin of their citizenship rights. Recent public statements by the Minister of Interior that hint at external political motives behind the application of the disengagement regulations only add fuel to the fire (Refs A-C).

19. (SBU) The Interior Ministry claims that it has upgraded thousands of Palestinians to yellow card status in the last several years, while only downgrading a few hundred to green card status. Many in the Palestinian and human rights community dispute those numbers. Furthermore, the Ministry has not offered any further explanation of why the citizenship status of these Palestinians were upgraded or downgraded -- some may have received yellow cards after a previous downgrade, for example.

#### Comment

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110. (SBU) Jordan's Interior Minister and others frequently refer to the disengagement regulations as justification for the policy of citizenship revocation. Hence the issue has become, in the eyes of the government, one of "correcting"

the status of Jordanians of Palestinian origin rather than one of revoking their citizenship. The disengagement regulations do not explicitly promote citizenship revocation, yet their vague provisions now serve as an effective cover for those who wish to pursue such a policy.

Mandel